

UNCLASSIFIED STATE 00044736
O 012341Z MAY 09
FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO ALL DIPLOMATIC AND CONSULAR POSTS COLLECTIVE IMMEDIATE
RUEHTRO/AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI IMMEDIATE 7092

UNCLAS STATE 044736

SENSITIVE

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [KIRF](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PREF](#) [KPAO](#)

SUBJECT: U.S. COMMISSION ON INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS
FREEDOM RELEASE OF ANNUAL REPORT, MAY 1

¶1. (SBU) Summary. The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) will release its Annual Report and recommendations on Countries of Particular Concern for systematic, ongoing and egregious violations of religious freedom (CPCs) on May 1. This cable clarifies the identity and role of the Commission and provides points (para 6) posts may draw from in response to questions about USCIRF's report.

¶2. (SBU) USCIRF is a Congressionally-mandated, independent commission. It was created by the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998 (IRF Act), the same legislation which created the State Department's Office of International Religious Freedom, mandated the State Department's IRF Report, and created the Countries of Particular Concern designation. The similarities between the names of the Commission on International Religious Freedom and the State Department's Office of International Religious Freedom have engendered confusion on numerous occasions, both domestically and internationally. Though USCIRF is not part of the executive branch of the U.S. government, numerous host governments confuse USCIRF's annual report with the Department's IRF Report, confuse USCIRF's recommendations on CPCs with the Secretary's legal designation of CPCs, or believe that USCIRF has a connection to the State Department or otherwise represents USG views.

¶3. (SBU) USCIRF's Report highlights a number of countries the Commission identifies as responsible for egregious violations of religious freedom, recommending that additional countries be designated CPCs and adding additional countries to USCIRF's 'watch list.' The State Department does not maintain a watch list on religious freedom. The report also includes policy recommendations for Congress and the Administration.

¶4. (SBU) USCIRF has previously recommended to the Secretary that the following countries be designated as CPCs: Burma, China, DPRK, Eritrea, Iran, Iraq, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Vietnam. USCIRF has recommended in this year's report that one additional country, Nigeria, be designated. The Secretary of State makes CPC designations based on the State Department's IRF Report, as well as USCIRF's recommendations and other relevant information. CPCs designated by the Secretary on January 16, 2009, are Burma, China, DPRK, Eritrea, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, and Uzbekistan.

¶5. (U) Host governments for countries highlighted in the USCIRF report may confuse USCIRF's report, USCIRF's CPC recommendations, and USCIRF's watch list with USG actions. Posts may want to draw on the following points in discussing the USCIRF report with host governments.

-- The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom is an independent commission, not part of the State Department or any other USG executive branch agency.

-- USCIRF's report reflects the views of the Commission, as well as the importance of religious freedom to the

American people.

-- The Department of State issues its Annual Report on International Religious Freedom (IRF Report) each fall. It is that report which provides the U.S. Government's views on the status of religious freedom in every country around the world.

-- The Secretary of State makes CPC designations based on the IRF Report. By law, the Secretary takes USCIRF's recommendations on CPCs into consideration. The State Department does not maintain a "watch list" on religious freedom.

-- The Secretary designated the following countries as CPCs in January 2009: Burma, China, DPRK, Eritrea, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, and Uzbekistan.

-- More information about USCIRF may be found at www.uscifr.gov. Information about the State Department's annual IRF Report, CPCs, and other U.S. Government positions related to religious freedom may be found at www.state.gov/g/drl/irf.

16. (U) Minimize considered.
CLINTON